



GROUND WATER AWARENESS WEEK

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: I don't have a water well in my back yard. Why should I care about ground water?

A: Whether you have your own well or not, the odds are even that your drinking water comes ultimately from ground water. An estimated 50 percent of Americans get their drinking water from ground water, and 75 percent of American cities rely upon ground water for public water supplies. The water you drink may come from a well, whether you realize it or not.

Q: What is ground water, anyway?

A: Ground water is simply that – it is water that exists underground in the tiny spaces between rocks and soil particles. The term “aquifer” refers to an underground geologic formation that is able to store and yield water.

Q: How does ground water get to the surface?

A: Ground water is an important component of the hydrologic cycle. Water evaporates into the air, condenses into clouds, returns to earth as precipitation. Water runoff then soaks into the soil, penetrating deep underground. Ground water flows through aquifers to a point where it then discharges into lakes or streams. The process is circular. We also drill wells that tap into aquifers and bring the water to the surface.

Q: If it's underground, we don't have to worry about it, right?

A: Wrong. Ground water is susceptible to contamination from a number of sources – manmade contaminants, malfunctioning septic systems, landfills. Over time, pollutants penetrate the ground and can foul aquifers, thus polluting valuable sources of drinking water.

Q: How do we protect ground water?

A: The North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Water Quality is the primary state agency responsible for safeguarding our water supply. At the federal level, the Environmental Protection Agency issues strict regulations regarding underground injection wells and water quality. The Ground Water Protection Council is a national organization that serves as a forum for state water regulators and technical experts to protect and conserve ground water.